DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 226 666 HE 015 934

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TITLE The Needs for and Benefits of Collaboration between Higher Education and Business and Industry.
PUB DATE [82]
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Education; Case Studies; Continuing Education; *Cooperative Programs; Economic Factors; Employment Programs; Field Experience Programs; *Higher Education; *Industry; Internship Programs; *Labor Force Development; Private Financial Support; *School Business Relationship; Technical Education
IDENTIFIERS Comprehensive Employment and Training Act

ABSTRACT

The mandate for and benefits of collaborative efforts between higher education and business and industry are considered, and case studies that can serve as models and sources for consultation are presented of successful collaborative efforts on the local, regional, state, and national levels. Literature and research gathered through the Higher Education/Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Project of the American Council on Education is used in support of collaborative processes and programs. The current increased interest in linkage efforts is typified by the prevalence of conferences, forums, and related collaborative programs. The problems that indicate a need for collaboration include: students enter the labor force without adequate basic skills, the state of the economy, the need to adjust to rapid change, and the unmet demand for highly skilled workers. Higher education contributes to business and industry by developing employment-related programs, professional training, and lifelong learning opportunities, while business/industry support career education and occupational training in a variety of ways. Collaborative efforts are frequently significant on the local community level, and more projects are being developed at the state level. (SW)

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# The Needs for and Benefits of Collaboration between Higher Education and Business and Industry

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the growing interest in and needs for greater collaborative efforts between higher education and business and industry. The many benefits to both parties and the nation as a whole, which result from successful programs, are developed. Case studies are provided - as models and sources for consultation - of successful collaborative efforts on the local, regional, state, and national level. Literature and research gathered through the Higher Education/CETA Project of the American Council on Education is used in support of collaborative processes and programs.

## The Growing Interest in Collaborative Efforts

Those who have spent a significant portion of their professional lives working toward the improvement of business and industry and higher education relationships can appreciate the current surge of interest in linkage efforts and activities. Accelerating growth is typified by the prevalence of conferences, forums, and related collaborative programs.

A noteworthy example of this trend was the Business-Higher Education Forum, initiated by the American Council on Education. Established in 1978, the Forum included more than 30 chief executive officers of major corporations and a like number of college and university presidents and chancellors. Stauffer (1980) reported the purposes of the Forum were:

1. To be a contact point for the highest-ranking leaders of corporate America and American higher educators for mutual material and intellectual benefit.
2. To be a focal point...in which mutual appreciation of problems and needs will be advanced....
3. To advance mutual understanding through an exchange of ideas and points-of-view at periodic retreats and by other means.
4. To address problems shared in common or held separately; and when determined, to engage in coordinated activity.
5. To facilitate understanding of corporate America on the campuses of the nation's colleges and universities.[2] (pp. 2-3)

Another recent effort was a forum held in 1981 for senior professionals to discuss education work relations for the eighties. The Forum, sponsored by The American Society for Training and Development and The American Council on Education, concluded that:

1. There is a need for joint remedial efforts between business and higher education to: (a) assist the elementary and secondary educational systems in improving the quality of their work products, and (b) provide remedial assistance in the work place and in higher education to those individuals who come out of public education programs without adequate preparation for the world of work.
2. The development of America's human capital is now a fundamental and necessary component of any national effort to renew our economy and remain competitive in domestic and international markets. Meeting this challenge must be a shared responsibility of the education and business community.
3. There is a need to strengthen cooperative education and to exchange faculty and managers between business and educational institutions.
4. More sharing of state-of-the-art technology between industry and educational institutions is needed.
5. There is a need to identify and eliminate those barriers that impede timely interactions between educators and employers.
6. Improved labor market information is needed for educational planning. There is also a need for effective mechanisms matching employee skill needs with educational programs and jobs at the local level.[3] (Education-Work Relations For The 80's, 1981)

The upsurge in collaborative efforts can be understood in light of current environmental realities. As Clark and Reinhart (1982) have pointed out, "higher education is confronted with a growing scarcity of funds, a need for program accountability, and increased demands to serve new and diverse groups that want a greater volume and mix of programs. Simultaneously, the private sector needs a highly motivated, disciplined, and skilled work force," [4] (p. 1)

The desirability of collaborative efforts are often most visible on the local level. An expression of local interest was a conference on "High Technology or High Unemployment: Challenge of the 80's." The conference, held in April 1982 in Orange County, California, had as its purpose, the establishment of a working model linkage between education, industry and economic development in the County.[5]

This recent growth is an extension of decades of involvement between higher education and business and industry. Throughout the years, business representatives have been involved in facets of public and private higher education. Business leaders were pivotal in establishing the system of vocational education, serving on boards of trustees of colleges and universities, providing internships and cooperative education programs, teaching courses and providing time and other resources to institutions in many communities. Business and industry has provided millions of dollars to the nation's colleges and universities in support of research, scholarships, gifts and tuition payments. Business/higher education partnerships have resulted in adopt-a-school programs and education-work councils.

The list of involvement is endless and generally impressive, although aspects of these relationships have concerned some members of both sectors. Perhaps the greatest period of tension between both sectors occurred in the 1960's when some of the nation's college students and faculty demonstrated against selected business/higher education relationships.

## Recognizing and Confronting Problems and Challenges of Collaborative Efforts

No discussion of factors responsible for the growing surge in linkages would be complete or accurate without recognizing contemporary problems and challenges which have made it imperative and desirable to

further collaborative efforts between higher education and business and industry.

As educators and business representatives agree, far too many students enter the labor force without necessary and adequate basic skills in oral and written communication and mathematics. Student achievement appears to have declined and public confidence in segments of education has been shaken. These changes have occurred just as public colleges and universities are confronting rising costs, declining enrollments, and less tax support.

Business and industry faces a number of equally important problems. The American economy continues to suffer from high interest rates, high unemployment and high government budget deficits. Productivity declines and the loss of a competitive edge in the international economy also damages the nation's overall economic health. Research and development efforts have not kept pace with contemporary requirements.

The rapidity and extent of changes have caught some institutions unprepared and unable to respond efficiently and effectively. Yet others, however, have been more successful in meeting the challenges of change.

Progressive higher education institutions are developing structures and mechanisms (such as skill centers) to respond to the needs of business and industry. These special "rapid reaction units" deliver occupational training and employment programs and services in a manner to reduce the time lag between identifying training needs and developing and implementing programs and services. Such units can also reduce the prevalent view that higher education provides an inadequate transition from theory to practice. The rapidity of change requires higher education and the private sector to encourage lifelong learning to permit individuals to adapt to future needs and conditions.

The current manpower development system faces numerous challenges. Among the most prominent are: (a) solving the imbalance between the unmet demand for highly skilled workers and the oversupply of unemployed and underemployed individuals currently unable to fill the demand; (b) upgrading and retraining entry level workers and preparing advanced professionals and technicians; (c) developing a work force proficient in basic skills; (d) providing a reliable workforce of individuals who demonstrate appropriate work attitudes and behaviors, and (e) increasing productivity in the public and private sectors.

These problems and challenges can be addressed effectively through reliance upon the nation's system of higher education. With regard to public institutions, the taxpayer's investment in college and university faculty and staff talent, physical facilities, equipment, and students are incalculable. This in-place system has superb resources, accessibility, legitimacy, and credibility. Higher education still enjoys adequate public support. Such a system cannot and should not be ignored. Spending large amounts of money on alternative delivery systems is wasteful, duplicative, and downright foolish. Most higher education institutions stand ready, willing, and able to support greater involvement with business and industry. Business and industry, recognizing their problems and challenges, seems committed to greater involvement as well.

## Benefits of Collaborative Efforts for Higher Education and Business and Industry

This preceding discussion helps to explain the current emphasis on joint higher education and business and industry efforts to collaborate. These efforts can also be understood through the application of social-exchange theory. This theory suggests that when resources are scarce or declining, beneficial relationships are more prevalent and interactions

between higher education institutions and the private sector are characterized by a high degree of cooperation and problem solving to achieve mutual gains for both parties. In short, both higher education and business and industry are likely to be attracted to an exchange when both parties recognize and profit from the benefits of a relationship.

This mutual attraction and "win-win" mode bears greater discussion. What does higher education gain through relationships with business and industry? What has higher education provided the private sector? Why does the private sector desire involvement with higher education? The answers to these questions are both global and abstract, pragmatic and tangible. Yet, to answer these questions is to understand the need for and nourishment of collaborative efforts.

On a global level, higher education needs the private sector. As Healy (1979) stated:

> Higher education shares in the good that business and industry create; we share in the profit they make. Outside of supporting funds, the business community is influential in forming the public mind and consciousness. Any disaffection on its part with higher education has an impact on legislation and voting and can damage both public and private higher education.[6] (p. 273)

Successful programs with the private sector are more likely to result in increased trust and respect and contracts for additional training. The importance of higher education to the private sector, the community, and state legislatures is reinforced with every successful program. Another direct benefit to higher education includes a challenge and opportunity for faculty to seriously examine and change curricula content and delivery which contributes to faculty revitaliza-

Higher education contributes to business and industry in a number of ways. The responsibility of employment related program development and operation is often assumed by colleges and universities. This is often a source of welcome relief for small businesses which are widespread and in need of resources, but ill equiped to develop and implement programs and services.

Another contribution of higher education institutions to business and industry is the provision of professional training in fields such as law, engineering, and business. Graduates of these programs are often hired by business and industry. Another contribution lies in the provision of basic and applied research which directly and indirectly benefits the private sector.

It is easy to overlook or devalue an essential contribution which higher education makes - not only to the private sector - but to the individual and the overall success of the nation. Healy (1979), the President of Georgetown University, wrote:

> All of our students come to us "in prison on their days." They are the captives of fear, of ignorance, of jealousy, and of complacency. The job of an undergraduate college is to help them shake loose, to free them from fear of their own skills, doubts of their own judgments, confusion before their imaginations. That work is far more important for business leaders than for people beginning their careers. I would guess that executives are selected because of their imagination, because of their courage, because of their capacity to deal with people, because of their compassion, because of a host of moral and spiritual strengths which are never part of any kind of formal training program but which were very

Business and industry desire involvement with higher education because their needs are met. The demonstration of good citizenship and good public relations combine to motivate the private sector to contribute to the health, welfare and development of a community by helping higher education institutions. Contributions are an investment and the dividends are community pride, success, and economic well-being. These characteristics are necessary for the success of business and industry as well.

Business and industry interest in and support of career education and occupational training not only serve the larger community, the college or university and the student, but the needs of the private sector. This support ensures a sufficient and dependable supply of skilled workers.

This assistance is especially important to the many college affiliated skill centers in the nation. These skill centers are a comprehensive, single organizational unit which provides skill training in multiple occupational areas. The training is often geared toward preparing individuals for entry level openings in local business and industry. Most college affiliated skill centers are sponsored by two-year institutions and many have very successful relationships with the private sector.

Wise (1981) has pointed out that "the private sector criticizes higher education because they believe they have a stake in how well schools educate; administrators can tap this concern by inviting businesses to help meet the educational needs of students"[8] (p. 78). Business is often prepared to help higher education if higher education will be more open to other interests.

Wise (1981), referring to an earlier study, offers a continuum of school-employer relationships:

1. Separation - schools and employers operate without information about each other and without any effort to share resources.
2. Communication - the school typically seeks information and advice from employers about training needs, yet each maintains their separate spheres of authority.
3. Cooperation - employers become involved in various school functions and provide resources of one kind or another to schools.
4. Collaboration - educational functions of both schools and employers are considered and a joint program is developed which links these functions in school and workplace.[9] (p.79)

More developed and mature relationships tend to occur in cooperation and collaboration. Successful examples of both types are more and more common between the private sector and higher education. The following case studies were chosen to exemplify mature collaborative relationships on a local, county, state, and national level.

## Successful Collaborative Efforts on the Local, County, State, and National Level

Collaborative efforts between colleges and universities and business and industry are frequently significant on the local community level. Processes employed to join both sectors and the successful ventures which result are visible features of the local landscape and benefit the entire community.

An example of local level collaboration involved Lake Land College in Matoon, Illinois and nearby businesses and industries. This college

established a Center for Business and Industry. The Center, utilizing the combined expertise of business and industry and the college, provides training and educational offerings to business and industry. Established with aid from the private sector, its policies are shaped by a board of consultants drawn from local business plus two representatives of the college. It is administered by a director chosen by the board. Its success has resulted in Illinois Consolidated Telephone Company choosing it to provide a comprehensive, multi-year management development program for more than 200 managers.

Another local example is the Management Internship Program found at California State College, Bakersfield. With the support of the Kern County CETA prime sponsor under Title VII, the program provides full-time CETA students an opportunity to receive career related training and experience in private industry, while completing their education.

Selected applicants attend training workshops prior to being placed in the private sector. Here they learn resume construction, interview techniques, skill assessment, and job search skills. Advisors for the Management Internship Program contact companies in the community, for example, banks, accounting firms, oil companies, and department stores, and apprise them of the programs and arrange for suitable internships.

Glendale Community College, Glendale, California, with funds from Title VII, train CETA eligible individuals in aviation with Lockheed Aircraft. Title VII funds also support programs in bank teller training in cooperation with local banks.

These programs consist of counseling skills (interview and job search techniques, life skills, career planning), survival skills, basic skills instruction, on-the-job training, specific occupational training coursework, and placement.

A final example on the local level is Clark College, located in Vancouver, Washington. It has developed an industry contacts program that is producing benefits for Southwest Washington industries. In exchange for tailored programs, those industries are providing scholarships, internships, equipment, land, instructors and numerous intangibles.

Three major electronics companies have located in Clark County in the past five years. Two of these companies moved from temporary facilities to larger, modern plants in 1982. One firm is providing a full-time computer science instructor for the 1982-83 academic year in addition to scholarships and computer hardware and software. Another firm is providing scholarships, science lab equipment, internships and part-time instructors. The third company has donated nine acres of prime space adjacent to its property for use in establishing an educational program to benefit the fast growing east Clark County area, in the heart of high-tech industrial plant locations.[10]

A creative and farsighted regional collaborative effort is underway in Orange County, California. In an attempt to link County industry, education, government, and labor, a Technology Exchange Center is being established. The functions of the Center are to:

1. Collect and share data about employment and training capability with and between industry and education sources.
2. Serve as a broker to arrange specific training programs for industry with educational sources.
3. Coordinate the exchange of employees between member companies to meet changes in employment needs.
4. Identify and report on changes in technology among member industries and businesses which will assist in (a) keeping instruction current with industry/business needs, and

(b) provide planning information to prepare for future employment needs.[11] The Center is organized and operated with maximum representation from local colleges, businesses and industries, government, and community based organizations.

More and more collaborative efforts are being developed and implemented on a state-wide basis. Many states have embarked on ambitious economic development programs. Successful collaborative efforts attract new companies, assist existing companies to expand, and aid those displaced by local plant closings.

An example of a statewide approach can be found in Ohio. The Ohio Board of Regents has initiated a number of activities focused on better linkage of the resources of the higher education community to the business and governmental sectors. Three activities are worthy of mention. First, regional linkage conferences were held in Ohio to bring together area representatives of business, industry, government, and higher education, for the general purpose of exploring the concept of linkages. Second, the Ohio Resource Network was established to mobilize the resources of 62 state-assisted colleges and universities to assist with problem solving in the private sector and to strengthen the state's economy. Third, establishment of regional work and learning councils throughout the state was encouraged.

The need for collaborative efforts is not local or state bound but truly national. This has been recognized by the General Motors Corporation and many community colleges throughout the nation. An alliance between both will double GM's capacity to train auto service technicians by utilizing teaching skills and classrooms of community colleges across the nation. This venture coincides with the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges emphasis on partnerships among two-year colleges with business and industry. Parnell (1982) has reported that

"as of April, 1982, 43 colleges are under contract to provide staff, and facilities for training and as many as 60 institutions may eventually be involved"[12] (p. 2).

A Final Note on Collaborative Efforts

These cases serve to illustrate the level and extent of collaborative efforts. These efforts provide support for and models of partnerships in the future between higher education and business and industry. As Healy (1979) maintained, sharing resources and strengthening the commitment to collaborative efforts can benefit all parties, and preserve our freedom:

> Maybe all we need is to be reminded that for two hundred years from the days of cottage industries and starving seminaries, up to multiversities and multinationals, business and higher education have needed each other. As long as we remain a free people, that need will continue. We face Ben Franklin's choice of hanging together or separately. Neither will thrive without the other - but our thriving together may keep both of us free.[13] (p. 281)

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Footnotes

1. The author has returned to his full-time position at Catonsville Community College, 800 S. Rolling Rd., Catonsville, Maryland 21228.
2. Stauffer, T.M. (Ed.), Agenda for Business and Higher Education. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1980.
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